

CDC/ATSDR Commissioned Corps Happenings

The Official Newsletter of the CDC/ATSDR Director's CC-PAC

Volume 1, Issue 3

October 2004

Current Members of CCPAC

CAPT Patricia Simone (Co-Chair)
CDR Wanda Barfield
CDR Marsha Davenport
CDR Sally Brown Kiefer
LCDR Daphne Moffett
CAPT Carol Pertowski
CAPT Raul Romaguera
CDR Abigail Shefer
CAPT Todd Weber

CAPT Edwin Kilbourne (Co-Chair)
LCDR Christine Casey
CDR William Greim
LCDR Stephen Martin
CAPT Ralph O'Connor
CAPT Sven Rodenbeck
LCDR Joshua Schier
CAPT Jordan Tappero
CDR Stephanie Zaza

Members of the CDC/ATSDR Commissioned Corps Policy Advisory Council (CC-PAC) are all “at-large” representatives and do not represent any particular center, organizational unit, or category.

CDC/ATSDR Office of Commissioned Corps Personnel (OCCP) staff is Ex-Official members of the committee and provide support services.

Note from the Chair:

Dr. Julie Gerberding created the CC-PAC nearly six months ago. The main purpose of the committee is to provide input to the Director on Commissioned Corps issues. The CC-PAC can develop policies and procedures specific to CDC/ATSDR where PHS-wide policies have not been articulated or are insufficiently specific, can assist in the development of input for PHS policy proposals that are under development, or may advise the Director on the possible need for new initiatives or policies. How existing, proposed, or developing policies would affect CDC/ATSDR's workforce and its ability to carry out its mission is a major focus of the committee.

The committee is composed of 18 officers from a variety of CIOs, categories, and locations. These officers have enthusiastically volunteered their time to attend (long!) monthly meetings and participate on subcommittees which sometimes require a significant amount of work between meetings. We have officers representing field staff, including CDR Marsha Davenport, CDR Wanda Barfield, and LCDR Stephen Martin, as well as CAPT Jordan Tappero who is representing international field staff. CDR Abigail Shefer is leading a subcommittee which is reviewing the readiness requirements for vaccination and tuberculin skin testing and assessing the consistency with CDC recommendations. CDR William Greim is leading a subcommittee that is developing protocols for CDC officer responses to improve coordination between CDC and OFRD and provide a system for tracking deployments by CDC officers for workforce management and promotion purposes. He and his team are working closely with the Director's Emergency Operations Center staff. CAPT Rodenbeck and I attended a full day meeting each week in August and September in Washington, D.C. to participate in the transformation work group. This group was composed of agency representatives and was tasked with developing options for transformation in seven areas (please see the article on Transformation update below). CAPT Rodenbeck is also chairing the newsletter subcommittee. CAPT Ed Kilbourne and I are the representatives to the Surgeon General's Policy Advisory Committee (for ATSDR and CDC respectively) which meets monthly in Washington, and CAPT Rodenbeck and CDR Stephanie Zaza are our alternates.

We receive an enormous amount of support from CAPT Austin Hayes and CAPT John Steward from the CDC Office of Commissioned Corps Personnel, as well as Mr. Aaron Arnold who handles all the logistics with remarkable efficiency. They have been working on a number of tasks, including assisting officers with readiness, developing an OCCP website, and reviewing some CDC Commissioned Corps policies.

Another one of our goals is to enhance communications through various means. This newsletter is one method, but several of our officers have also sponsored brown bag sessions at various CDC/ATSDR locations around Atlanta. If you have ideas about things you would like to hear more about and suggestions for ways you would like to hear about them, please send your suggestions to one of the committee members.

While many of these activities are still ongoing, they represent a tremendous amount of effort thus far from the committee members, and I want to personally thank them for their dedication and support for all the officers at CDC/ATSDR.

Reported by: CAPT Patricia Simone

3rd, 4th, and 5th Meeting of CCPAC-July 16, August 20, and September 17, 2004

CC-PAC is currently reviewing and addressing several issues that Commissioned Corps (CC) Officers are faced with. CC-PAC has formed subcommittees that will address immunization, communication, and responses issues. The subcommittees are comprised of current CC-PAC members with various levels of expertise. Subcommittee members have been granted the authority to work with Subject Matter Experts within the CIOs to address more complex issues.

1. ***Immunization Subcommittee*** is charged with clarifying CDC/ACIP recommendations vs. the Basic level of readiness standards as detailed in July 2, 2004, Manual Circular number 377 (http://dcp.psc.gov/PDF_docs/Man_circ_377.pdf).
2. ***Newsletter Subcommittee*** will facilitate all communication efforts among officers within CDC/ATSDR domestically and internationally from the CCPAC
3. ***Readiness and Response Subcommittee*** it's charge is to seek ways of better coordinating and tracking mechanisms that will allow for better deployment coordination efforts with department and agency responses

Proposed Transformation of the CC is still at hand, the CC-PAC is actively engaged with the department to identify any transformation issues and the impact on this agency.

CC-PAC is collaborating with Office of Commissioned Corps Personnel (OCCP) to track and continue awareness for all officers to meet the basic readiness standards. CC-PAC members have and will continue to sponsor Brown Bag meetings within the CIOs to address several issues that are important to individual officers. If you would like to arrange a Brown Bag meeting, please contact any CC-PAC member or OCCP staffer.

A Personal Perspective from a CC-PAC Member

I was selected to serve on the CDC Director's CC-PAC because I sent in a letter along with supervisory approval thereby self-identifying myself as an interested officer. That's how all PAC members were selected. The CC-PAC's charter states members will serve between one to three year terms, staggering rotations to overlap the terms of current members with new ones. CC-PAC members represent all professional categories, the majority of CIOs, and field and international officers. During our first meeting, we were specifically tasked by Drs. Snider and Thacker to be the 'ears and eyes' of officers within the agency for Dr. Gerberding. As members, we are to actively identify CC policies that impact officers and may have bearing on their ability to perform their responsibilities to CDC/ATSDR. Many officers face a conundrum by serving two masters. COERs are based on service to this Agency which also pays our salaries. Promotions and salary increases are tied to COERs and service to the Corps. This presents a particular challenge for officers working in areas in which increased Corps demands/responsibilities are not understood or perhaps even valued.

I initially thought CC-PAC members held immensely differing viewpoints regarding Corps policies and its transformation. I was somewhat taken aback at the first meeting. I think now of CC-PAC's members as more alike than disparate; I believe each member takes their task very seriously. Our meetings are scheduled the third Friday afternoon of each month for three hours, and we invariably run over the allotted time. Our meetings are robust, thoughtful, and exhausting. There are many topics in which we've engaged, and in my opinion, thus far, we've been reactive, e.g., reactive to officers outside Atlanta who had difficulty receiving required vaccines. It's easier to meet the requirements for Basic Readiness in Atlanta, but equity is desired for all officers throughout CDC/ATSDR, and we're mindful of that.

I don't know if participating in this CC-PAC will hurt or help my future officer career. I applied the last day possible. My supervisor was cynical, but encouraging. I had no idea if it would be meaningful, add another layer of uncertainty or possible secrecy or if it would generally help officers. The transformation and new policies of the Corps may be reflective of the new world in which we find ourselves, but everyone has acknowledged that communication all around has been less than stellar. This has resulted, for some, in an environment of distrust, confusion and one often ripe with rumors. This is not conducive to a productive and wholesome work environment. However, some officers passionately welcome these changes. I can disclose that I'm happy to be concentrating more on my personal fitness. I would never believe I could ever do a man's push-up. Now I can't give you twenty, but in the low teens. As a CC-PAC member, I've been contacted by numerous officers serving within CDC/ATSDR, and that's been extremely rewarding. From these contacts, I've able to bring a myriad of topics to our meetings.

The CC-PAC is still new and finding its foundation. The members are participating whole-heartedly. I encourage you to contact any CC-PAC member because whatever you're experiencing, you're likely not unique. By the time I've personally experienced something or another officer has shared something with me, it's probably widespread. I believe we have an opportunity to assist the Agency and the Corps. The survival of the Corps within this Agency means a lot. I'm hopeful.

Reported by: CDR Sally Brown Keifer

Update Concerning the Transformation of the Commissioned Corps

You may have notice on page 2 of the [Commissioned Corps Bulletin](http://dep.psc.gov/PDF_docs/Oct04ccb.pdf) October 2004 edition that there is an article about Transformation (http://dep.psc.gov/PDF_docs/Oct04ccb.pdf). CAPT Patricia Simone and CAPT Sven Rodenbeck represented CDC and ATSDR, respectively, on the Transformation Workgroup. The discussions by the workgroup were insightful, comprehensive, tedious, and frank. Although the Transformation options developed by the group were specifically developed for major overarching programmatic issues, the Workgroup frequently discussed the potential impact the options may have on officers. The discussions and options developed for the Secretary centered on seven issues:

- How should officers be grouped for managing the Commissioned Corps?
- How should HHS positions be identified – as uniquely Corps or civilian or open to both systems?
- How should position billet content be changed and approved?
- How should hard-to-fill, hardship, and hazardous duty positions be filled and what should be the characteristics of an officer assignment system?
- What should be the timing of BOTC and how should support be provided for training and career development?
- How should new Commissioned Corps officers be recruited?
- How should any new resource needs be budgeted?

For each of the seven issues, several options were developed. Typically the options were fairly broad in scope and covered the status quo, centralized management, and a mixture of centralized management and agency management. After consulting with the agencies, the Secretary will decide which of the options will be implemented.

After the Secretary's decision, Transformation will only have begun. We will need to develop the specific policies and procedures (e.g., the nuts and bolts) that will be needed to implement the chosen options. You can participate in this implementation process by being actively involved on your Professional Advisory Committees (PACs), which

will be asked to provide vital input, review and guidance as we move forward. In addition, the CDC/ATSDR CC-PAC will also be actively involved with the future steps of Transformation.

PHS Uniform Issues

As the Commissioned Corps continues on the path of *Transformation*, many issues have arisen regarding uniform wear and the uniform policy at CDC and ATSDR. The following are three issues that are important to all officers at CDC/ATSDR:

1. Changeover to Winter Uniforms

Effective the first Monday in October (October 4, 2004), the Uniform of the Day at CDC/ATSDR for the Fall/Winter period is either Service Dress Blue or Service Dress Blue Sweater (SDBS). An authorized option to the Service Dress Blue Uniform is the Blue Windbreaker Jacket (BWJ) in lieu of the Service Dress Blue coat. Metal rank insignia are worn on the BWJ. Officers also may elect to wear the following authorized alternatives: Winter Blue, Summer Blue ("Salt and Pepper"), or Summer Khaki. The Army Black V-neck Sweater is authorized for wear with the Summer Blue and Summer Khaki uniforms.

CAPT Austin Hayes in the CDC Office of Commissioned Corps Personnel is the Local Uniform Authority (LUA) for all of CDC/ATSDR, except for officers stationed in the Washington, DC area. Metro Washington, DC officers wear the Uniform of the Day prescribed by the Surgeon General, who is the LUA for the DC area. The uniform of the day memorandum for the Fall/Winter period in the Metro DC area is available on the internet at http://dcp.psc.gov/PDF_docs/Uniform_Day_9_2004.pdf.

2. Proper Wear of the Working Khaki Uniform

There has been some confusion lately regarding the Working Khaki uniform. Although every officer is required to have two complete sets of Working Khaki uniforms to comply with readiness/deployment standards, the Working Khaki uniform is NOT authorized for wear in regular office settings. The Working Khaki uniform is only authorized to be worn while an officer is deployed. The Summer Khaki uniform is the one authorized for wear in normal office settings. This is established in current USPHS Commissioned Corps policy. No LUA can legally authorize the wearing of the Working Khaki uniform in office settings as it would be contradictory to current Corps policy.

The following table explains the difference between the Working Khaki and Summer Khaki uniforms:

Working Khaki vs. Summer Khaki Uniforms						
	Material	Name Tag?	Ribbon Bar? ^A	Rank Insignia?	Miniature PHS Corps Device?	Shoes ^B
Working Khaki	Poly/Cotton	Optional ^C	No	Yes	Yes	Black
Summer Khaki	Certified Navy Twill (CNT) <u>OR</u> Poly/Wool	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Black <u>OR</u> Brown

^AOnly authorized awards should be worn at any time.

^BBlack socks must be worn with black shoes, and brown (khaki) socks must be worn with brown shoes.

^CThe name tag should be worn with the Working Khaki uniform unless it would cause an unsafe working environment (i.e., potential for getting it caught in moving equipment, etc.).

Officers should make sure they are properly wearing an authorized Summer Khaki uniform while in their normal office settings. Regardless of the material you choose, all parts of the Summer Khaki uniform must match, including the belt, combo cap cover, and/or garrison cap. Mixing various materials is not authorized. The same is true for the Working Khaki when it is worn in a deployment situation.

3. Commissioned Corps Uniform Wear Policy at CDC/ATSDR

On Tuesday, August 31, 2004, Dr. Julie Louise Gerberding, CDC Director and ATSDR Administrator, sent an All-Hands Email to everyone at CDC/ATSDR describing the policy for uniform wear at CDC/ATSDR and her continued commitment to the USPHS Commissioned Corps. The Email from Dr. Gerberding is reprinted here, in its entirety:

The Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service (PHS) and the Acting Assistant Secretary for Health, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), have encouraged Commissioned Corps Officers to wear their uniform daily as a demonstration of their commitment to the PHS Commissioned Corps. This action remains voluntary and serves to demonstrate the individual's commitment to the Commissioned Corps, over and above their commitment to program initiatives of their agency assignments. In addition, this action helps fulfill certain promotion precepts for Commissioned Officers.

Recently, my office received feedback from Senior Commissioned Officers that Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (CDC/ATSDR) staff have stated that continuation of daily uniform wearing will harm their prospects for a career at CDC/ATSDR. Statements that discourage daily uniform wear are directly opposed to HHS policy and undermine CDC/ATSDR's commitment and support of the Commissioned Corps. Please be advised that any statements discouraging the voluntary wearing of the Commissioned Officers uniform for any period of time will not be tolerated.

The Commissioned Corps continues to be a vital part of the CDC/ATSDR community, and I remain committed in my support of this important component of our agency.

Julie Louise Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H.

An important way officers can show your commitment to the Commissioned Corps is to wear the uniform. However, simply wearing the uniform is not enough – the uniform should be worn properly. Probably one of the best ways to assure that you are wearing the uniform appropriately is to ask a fellow officer. In addition, information concerning what is authorized to wear and the proper grooming standards can be found in the Commissioned Corps Personnel Manual, Subchapter 26.e Uniforms (<http://dcp.psc.gov/INDEX-B.asp#U>). The Commissioned Corps Bulletin generally has a uniform Q&A section which is very helpful.

News Flash - New Basic Readiness Requirements

On October 4, the Acting Assistant Secretary for Health issued "Clarification and Supplemental Policies and Procedures for Manual Circular Public Health Service No. 377" (http://dcp.psc.gov/PDF_docs/04-003_PPM.pdf). Of particular note is the waiving of the requirement to send in the award certificate associated with the President's Challenge Physical Activity and Fitness Awards Program; provided that you are a member of the "USPHS Group No. 13537." In addition, officers assigned overseas to foreign countries can meet the Basic Life Support (BLS) certification requirement by completing a BLS course or equivalent within that country; it doesn't need to be the specific American Heart Association course.

Reminder – Getting Credit for CDC/ATSDR Hurricane-Related Deployments

This is a reminder that officers deployed by the agency in response to public health emergencies or to meet urgent public health needs can get credit for that deployment if they submit the appropriate documentation through this office. To obtain credit, send a memo indicating the dates of deployment, place to which deployed, purpose of deployment, and a statement that the officer wore the PHS uniform during the time of deployment. The memo must be signed by both the officer and the officer's supervisor. Send it, together with a copy of the travel voucher (not travel order--the signed travel voucher) for the deployment to the staff specialist in OCCP who serves your CIO (Mail stop K-27).

Some Helpful Hints!

For those officers trying to meet Basic Requirements, please note the following updates:

- There is a new number for faxing licensure documents. The number is 240-453-6142.
- The phone contact number for licensure documents has also changed and is now 240-453-6037.
- The fax number to submit other documents to the OPF has NOT changed and is still 301-480-1436.
- For those officers in the DC area, completing the vaccination requirements is possible through the immunization clinic at the National Navy Medical Center. The hours for the clinic are 0730 to 1600 M-F and the phone number is 301-295-4611.
- If training for the APFT, also join the President's Challenge to receive credit for your training.

Please note below information found on CCMIS:

1. There is a new form for officers to record APFT information.
2. Reminder: dental forms are required to be submitted at the time of an officers 5 year physical evaluation and these are also located in this section.

Website is <http://dcp.psc.gov/DCPForms.asp>

Medical Officer Resources

The mentoring group of the PPAC has created guidance on the medical officer benchmarks and hints on the CVs for medical officers to help in the promotion process for officers. The documents can be found on the PPAC website: (<http://gis.cdc.gov/atsdr/ppac/>).

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

In order for CC-PAC to do an effective job, we need to hear from you. Please contact any CC-PAC member and provide them with your concerns and possible solutions to issues.

As needed, CC-PAC will also send out messages requesting your opinions on various matters. We look forward to our activities and your active involvement.

